

NEW JERSEY COALITION FOR WORLD CLASS MATH

www.njworldclassmath.webs.com

Testimony to the State Board of Education
Presented by Jill Gladstone
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Good afternoon members of the State Board of Education. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Jill Gladstone and I am a co-founder of the New Jersey Coalition for World Class Math. I am also a Bridgewater-Raritan Board of Education Member, but I come to you today as an individual and I am not in any way representing the B-R BOE.

As they say, "The writing is on the wall".

Enough has been written in newspapers, education journals, federal reports, and international tests reports over the last few years for everyone to know that K-12 math education in the U.S., stemming from the "Reform Math" standards of the 1990's, is not providing children with a strong foundation in mathematics. The days of "mile wide and inch deep" state curriculum standards, and curricula aligned to such standards, must come to an end. The latest 2009 NJ math standards draft reflects that same 1990's trade mark. It is not clear, is not well-organized, does not contain appropriate content through grade 12, is confusing to teachers and parents, and does not follow many of the National Math Panel's recommendations. Furthermore, in our global economy, we cannot afford to wait any longer for New Jersey to produce math standards that are internationally benchmarked and on par with the highly ranked states' standards of California, Massachusetts, and Indiana. I urge the Board to vote "no" on any proposed standards that are not truly world class.

As they say, *"It's time for a change"*.

Not only is it time for a change to write and embrace new, world class math standards for our children's future, it is the time to change the process by which all core content curriculum standards are written in New Jersey. They appear to be written in a vacuum and I find this very disconcerting. The NJ DOE's web site does not post the math revision drafts online, nor does it not advertise any public forums or provide other means for NJ stakeholders' input. The drafts were only shared with select groups of educators and a few associations. I persisted with multiple phone calls to the NJ DOE to get information which should have been easily accessed by all members of the public on the Internet. I am familiar with transparency and a genuine effort to include all stakeholders in the standards writing process in other states. Why must New Jersey taxpayers be kept in the dark?

The process continues to be flawed.

When a list of the standards writing participants was finally e-mailed to me after several requests, I was again disappointed. It was clear that the NJ DOE did not follow one key component in writing effective math standards as outlined in this 2008 National Math Panel recommendation: "Mathematicians should be included in greater numbers, along with mathematics educators, mathematics education researchers, curriculum specialists, classroom teachers, and the general public, in the standard-setting process..."

New Jersey did not include the general public, nor did they include "greater numbers of mathematicians". In fact, there were only two, and one of them was the only mathematician who participated in writing the 1996 (and current) NJ math standards! Do we even know if the NJ DOE ever incorporated the input from the other mathematician in these 2009 revisions? The New Jersey

Coalition for World Class Math did obtain reviews of the revisions draft from several outside mathematicians and I'll be happy to send you copies of them.

Another flaw I see with the list of participants is that it's a very one-sided group. Each of the teachers and administrators are from school districts using Everyday Math and/or Connected Math, two very controversial "reform" math programs. Not one of them uses a traditional, or even a balanced, elementary math program. And another panelist, who was also on the 1996 writing team, is an author of a new elementary math textbook being marketed in NJ. She also ~~she~~ runs workshops in districts to inform parents and teachers about this program.

I am asking the Board, where is the balance in the math standards writing team?

Members of the Board: Please vote "NO" on any math standards revision that does not resemble world class standards. In addition, please consider a formal review of the entire standards writing system, in all content areas, to ensure a more transparent, inclusive, and balanced process and to demonstrate accountability to the citizens of New Jersey.

Thank you for your time.